

The College of Natural and Mathematical Sciences
DEAN'S RESPONSE - 2019 Academic Program Review
Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry
UMBC

SUMMARY

The external reviewers (i.e., Carole A. Fierke and Miguel A. Garcia-Garibay) are highly esteemed members within their respective scientific disciplines. Their qualifications include years of experience, expertise, and leadership appropriate to conduct a formal Academic Program Review (APR) of the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry.

In general, the department is well run, under strong leadership, and positioned for significant growth in research and reputation. The academic programs are of high quality with acknowledgement of the strong dedication of its faculty to student success and inclusive excellence. Challenges include the need of additional faculty in specific areas, an adequate pool of graduate students to support research, and a well-designed strategic plan/vision for the department.

The external reviewers' report reflects the general opinion of the Dean

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

Since the last APR in 2012, the Department has been well supported with priority hiring (for replacement and growth) by the college, which has resulted in the hiring of at least one faculty member each year. One full professor (as an external chair hire), three assistant professors, two lecturers, and one pre-professoriate fellow (positioned to convert to a tenure-track appointment in two years) have been added to the department's roster.

The development of a strategic plan that is consistent with plans and priorities of the College and the University and takes into account opportunities to collaborate with other units on campus and other research institutions in the area is strongly warranted. The Dean supports the strategic hiring of faculty members in accord with the recommendation of the department chair and its faculty.

The college has made significant investments in the support of faculty success. Examples of these initiatives include an Entrepreneurial Skillset Training program for all incoming faculty, Entrepreneurship Opportunity for Associate Professors in CNMS, NSF Career Award workshops, NIH RO1 proposal training, and the Natural Sciences Fellowship Program. In addition, the college has established a Science and Math Advising Resource Team (SMART), under the directorship of Michelle Bulger. This team of five staff is dedicated to the professional advising of students with declared majors in biology, chemistry, and biochemistry only. The creation/expansion of SMART is intended to further reduce the service/advising workload on the faculty in Chemistry and Biochemistry.

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The college continues to invest in the department through numerous initiatives, such as Summer STEM (designed to increase summer enrollment and tuition return), workshops for applying for NSF graduate research fellowships, CNMS Summer Research Assistance program, financial support for training programs (e.g., CBI), etc. The Dean concurs with the reviewers that increasing the size of the incoming graduate class must be accompanied by increases in both the departmental grant funding to enhance the RA opportunities for the students and the applicant pool to the department.

The academic curriculum is under the purview of the department and its faculty. The department embraces assessment as a means to improving student learning outcomes and the quality of its undergraduate and graduate programs. The chair is encouraged to develop a plan that ensures the safety of students in the teaching laboratories, as noted by the reviewers.

The needs of the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry are given full and equitable consideration by the College. Additional funding (e.g., teaching assistantships) is requested through the strategic budget planning process.